



Facilitating e-veterinary certification based on single window system

This project aimed to assist developing countries with learning about e-veterinary certification. The purpose of this was to promote better engagement in the international trade of animals and animal products through sharing information, country visits by experts and providing information on what other international organizations are doing with regards to e-veterinary certification.

Given the lack of comprehensive information about using e-veterinary certification, the project was designed to identify the basic features of operating systems that are in place. These include: technical details, motivations for introducing e-certification (for example, economic development, trade facilitation and enhancing regulatory controls), and responding to challenges that prevent widespread use.

Considering the desirability of establishing streamlined border processes compatible with e-veterinary certification (including, as appropriate, a single window system), a survey was developed to gauge how streamlined regulatory processes for cross-border trade are being implemented. The project also considered issues of e-certification in other SPS areas to provide a clear picture on trade facilitation. Based on the review of these documents and other relevant information, a set of recommendations for the WOH, its member countries and other relevant stakeholders, including resource partners, was developed.

More information about the findings of the project and the final report is available [here](#).

STDF/PG/609

Status

Completed

Start Date

01/07/2018

End Date

31/07/2020

Project Value (US\$)

\$200,748

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$146,048

Beneficiaries

Developing countries

Implementing Entities

World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

Background

In 2015, the STDF working group took particular interest in e-certification in SPS. After a session discussion, it was concluded that "there is still a lack of understanding among SPS and trade practitioners regarding the implementation of e-certification".

A subsequent STDF seminar on SPS e-certification, held in June 2016, focused on addressing the opportunities and challenges related to its implementation, particularly in developing countries.

On both occasions, applicable standards regarding animal health were presented by the WOAAH, including meat trade. Based on these discussions, it was apparent that e-certification for animal health is not widely used. An understanding of its application among veterinary services is still limited, especially in developing countries.

A project submitted by five applicant countries (Cambodia, Eswatini, Nigeria, Paraguay and Zimbabwe) was approved by the STDF working group at a meeting in October 2017. The WOAAH was appointed to implement the project, as requested by applicant countries.

Results

The main product developed through the project was a report drafted by a consultant, then reviewed by experts of the reference group and steering committee. The report describes the state of play of veterinary e-certification and single window systems in selected developing and developed countries, as well as current activities undertaken by relevant international organizations.

The report is structured in two sections based on the following main outputs:

Development and implementation of in-country surveys

The WOAAH, along with the steering committee, developed an in-country survey plan based on:

- A questionnaire. 11 countries completed the questionnaire.
- In-country visits. 5 developing countries received a visit by experts on e-certification and a single window system.

The project included an in-country survey for developed and developing countries (Australia, Chile, Eswatini, France, Japan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Paraguay, Singapore, United Kingdom and Zimbabwe), which was aimed at collecting information about their current situation in relation to e-certification and a single window system. Eswatini, Malaysia, Nigeria, Paraguay and Zimbabwe also received a visit from an e-certification and single window expert to facilitate deeper insight into their current national situations.

Research about ongoing work on e-certification in other SPS areas and analysis of commonalities and differences

Based on desktop research, commonalities and differences were identified between other SPS areas and veterinary certification. This was based on experiences from the following organizations: Codex Alimentarius, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the World Customs Organization (WCO).

These four existing frameworks in SPS areas are described below:

- The Codex Alimentarius framework includes an electronic working group that develops guidance on paperless certification and provides a data model of its generic official certificate, which does not introduce specific hardware and/or software requirements at the national level.
- The IPPC framework, comprising the development of the Global ePhyto Hub and the Generic ePhyto National System.
- The eCITES framework, which includes making available a CITES e-permitting toolkit, and working together with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on its automated system for the customs data eCITES module.
- The WCO framework on the exchange of information, titled "globally networked customs", encompasses all relevant tools and standards, including the WCO Data Model, a semantic and messaging standard that does not require specific hardware and/or software solutions at the national level.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the report, the WOAAH has been advised to consider the following recommendations:

WOAH standard-setting process

- Introducing the WOHAT Terrestrial Animal Health Code and the Aquatic Animal Health Code's additional guidance to transition to an electronic format based on a single window system.
- Establishing an ad hoc group with dedicated tasks related to e-veterinary certification based on a single window system.

WOAH collaboration with other international organizations

e-Veterinary certification at the national level should not be an isolated process among veterinary authorities. Similarly, e-veterinary certification at the international level should not be an isolated process for the WOHAT. Cooperation between the WOHAT, IPPC and Codex, as well as customs authorities, will help countries develop e-veterinary certification for international trade based on the single window system.

Specific recommendations to the WOHAT include:

- Further explore collaboration with the Codex Alimentarius and the IPPC in the framework of the WTO SPS committee meetings.
- Cooperate with the WCO secretariat and relevant experts on enabling inclusive digital collaboration between government agencies in the context of a single window environment.
- Work with the UNCTAD to develop a standardized e-veterinary certification technical solution for export and import with the use of the WOHAT derived information package from the WCO.
- Further explore with the Codex Alimentarius commission the possibility of incorporating the Codex derived information package on standardized e-certification technical solutions for import and export.
- Further explore with the IPPC secretariat the possibility of exchanging electronic veterinary certificates through the Global ePhyto Hub; and the potential for expanding the Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS) to enable it to be used for international trade of animals and animal products.
- Investigate the possibility of a partnership with the World Bank Group in its efforts to implement the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Considerations for a technical solution

- The availability of an off-the-shelf software solution for e-certification, which can be configured to respond to the specific requirements and needs of veterinary authorities, might be considered a feasible option.
- This software solution must not only support international exchanges but provide for digitization of processes at the national level in a single window environment.
- The software solution is expected to benefit from cooperation between the WOHAT and the WCO on the WCO data model and the WOHAT derived information package. Formal validation of the package will also assist countries to better engage in the international trade of animals and animal products through e-certification.
- The WCO data model also contains the Codex derived information package. Countries with limited resources and IT infrastructure might be interested in working with an off-the-shelf software solution for electronic certification by veterinary authorities and for e-certification by food authorities. Such a multidisciplinary software solution can be created by incorporating the WCO data model with the WOHAT derived information package and the Codex derived information package.